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The Castle de Albani

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THE

CASTLE DE ALBANI:

OR,

THE USURPER PUNISHED:

INCLUDING

THE MEMOIRS

OF

THE COUNTESS ST. ALVA,

AND HER

DAUGHTER ISABELLA.

AN ORIGINAL ROMANCE.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN ARLISS (LATE AR
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DE ALBANI.

THE scenery that surrounded the Chateau de Albani was beautiful and picturesque; nature and art seemed combined in one design to surprise and please the eyes of a visitor: yet the illustrious owner of the mansion had not for several years reposed under its roof. Three domestics only were retained in the interior of the castle: Anselmo, his wife Margaret, (both very aged persons) and Beatrice, a stout young woman employed in household drudgery. One side of the park belonging to the castle was surrounded by a straggling hamlet, inhabited for the most part by harmless peasants, who subsisted by their daily labour. This humble village could only boast three houses of a superior cast from the uniform cottage style of the rest; one belonged to Pietro, a substantial farmer, who had several sons and daughters—the next to a vintager and his family—and the third, which stood entirely detached from the rest, to a grey-headed venerable looking man, commonly known by the appellation of the misanthrope: his real name had never transpired in the village, but the singularities of his manner had excited much attention and vague conjecture.

This dwelling was surrounded by tall trees, the branches of which, as he never suffered them to be lopt, were so thickly interwoven as to form a kind of screen to shade his house from observation. He walked much about the village and its environs: but his rambles were either very early in the morning, or late at night. It was seldom that he deigned to answer any one that spoke to him, when by accident they met: and not a human being was permitted to cross his threshold, except Joseph his domestic, and an old woman who occasionally went to clean the house and wash their linen. At these times she never saw the master, nor was her curiosity (in which she was

not deficient) in the least gratified by the conversation of Joseph—of whom for taciturnity, and some other peculiar traits in his character, might be said—like master like man. Anselmo and Margaret, the domestics of the castle, were also very reserved to the people of the village; though the whole of them were tenants to the count de Albani, their lord. 'Tis true they did not carry this distance of behaviour to such a degree as the misanthrope: but they neither paid nor received any visits to or from persons of their own condition.

The Chateau de Albani was far famed for its galleries of paintings and sculpture: several amateurs of the fine arts (among which were noblemen, both from England and various parts of the continent) had repaired hither in order to gratify their taste, by a sight of these rare and consequently valuable collection. But their expence and trouble in visiting the castle were equally vain. The old couple entrusted with the care of the edifice, denied all admittance to strangers of every rank, at least admitting none further than the lower apartments of the middle division of the chateau. They said it was by the count's order they acted thus, and neither gold or intreaties would make them disobey his commands. Affairs had long worn this aspect, when one eventful night caused a great revolution in the castle and its environs.

The evening had been tempestuous, and Pietro, the good farmer, had been on business to a town above twelve miles from his home. Owing to the inclemency of the weather, and the heavy rain that fell incessantly, the hostess of the inn he put up at, who was indeed related to his wife, prevailed on him to sojourn there for the night: he gave a reluctant consent, as nothing was more unpleasant to him than to sleep from under his own peaceful roof: about nine, the clouds began to disperse, the rain ceased, the thunder rolled at a distance, and was seldom heard. Pietro determined, in spite of every remonstrance used by his kind friends, to return to Albani: heedless of the robbers and assassins who were said to infest the roads, and often drag the harmless traveller to some of the caverns that served them for a retreat. Happily for the worthy farmer, none of the evils the good folks at Montreal had threatened him with, were allotted to him. He journeyed on wholly unmolested: he had arrived within a mile and a half of Albani, when he was alarmed by the

appearance of fire: as the village stood on an eminence, it was impossible to mistake the direction from which the flames issued. The natural humanity of his heart made him feel for every one in distress: but he could not be blamed for feeling more acutely at that period for his own family, and the dwelling where all the wealth he had for years been toiling for, was centered. He spurred his mule on, and soon arrived at the wished-for spot: he found his farm safe, and raised a fervent thanksgiving to heaven, and then proceeded to alarm the villagers, none of whom, to his great surprise, were aware of the fire that had broken out in the house of the misanthrope; who had gained much respect in the village, from the many secret services which the peasantry had attributed to his bounty; several of them who had been sick, or labouring under severe misfortunes, had found an unexpected relief; money had been flung into their cottage, at the dusk of the evening, and other means resorted to of giving unsolicited benefactions. As instances of this kind frequently occurred, it was certain that the liberal minded donor must reside near the spot; and equally certain that he must be wealthy —and as the castle was not inhabited by its noble owner, there was no one within the line of probability, but this solitary being, on whom to rest their suspicions: indeed his outward deportment, which seemed composed of *hauteur* and reserve, did not favour these conjectures: though from circumstances it gained an almost general belief.

By the time Pietro had got a few of the peasantry to his assistance, and reached the house, one side of it was nearly enveloped in flames, though the utmost expedition had been used in giving the alarm. They found great difficulty in alarming Joseph, who slept in an apartment immediately under his master, from a death like stupor into which the sulphur attending on the flames had lulled him. It was some few moments after they had burst open the door and dragged him forth, that he recovered his senses, so far as to have a real knowledge of the situation from which he had been rescued; and the dreadful flames that seemed to threaten the destruction of the remaining apartments in a trivial space of time. The usual coldness of his disposition, and the taciturnity for which he was famed, had vanished; and he was liberally distributing thanks and promises, when the recollection

of his master flashed across his brain. Strange it was, but no less true, that the joy of rescuing Joseph from his impending fate, had suspended every other feeling from the minds of his honest preservers.

The cry of "Save him, save him, save my noble master, or let me perish with him!" awakened all their recollection and native humanity. Joseph was rushing towards the door stair-case, heedless that it was enveloped in flames: he was forcibly restrained by two stout peasants, from whose grasp he struggled to free himself, exclaiming: "Miscreants, wretches, unhand me, and let me fly to my dear lord; he once preserved my life at the peril of his own: and shall I repay such service with base ingratitude? no, rather let me perish!" Again he made a forcible effort to get from them, his spirits almost wrought to a pitch of enfrenzied fury: but being overpowered, he sank under the conflict and fainted. He was borne in this insensible state to the castle: for Anselmo and his wife had at length yielded, though with evident reluctance, to the intreaties they received to open their doors to the unfortunate sufferers, and such of their effects as could be saved from the devouring element. The misanthrope had been conveyed to the castle a few minutes before his faithful and affectionate servant. He had been saved by the perseverance and courage of Lubin, Pietro's eldest son: who had hastened to their assistance soon after the first alarm. He entered the window by a ladder; the room was already consuming, even the bed clothes had caught: but he triumphantly flung the misanthrope across his shoulder, and descended with him. The aged man had received no other injury than his hands being slightly scorched. The youth relinquished his burthen into the hands of his father, who had him conveyed to the castle on a kind of litter. Joseph could not be comforted, or indeed convinced of the safety of his master, till he was admitted to the room where that gentleman had been put to bed: and the sincerest congratulations on each other's safety took place between them.

The apartment into which the misanthrope had been conveyed, was the one formerly used by the count: and lest he should suddenly return to the castle, Anselmo and Margaret kept it in constant readiness. The misanthrope, after the first sensations caused by terror, surprise, and his unexpected deliverance, had subsided, cast his

eyes round the apartment in a most wistful manner; while he said in a voice scarcely legible: "Is it possible—it is—it must be so—gracious heaven! after all that I have vowed:" then turning to Joseph he enquired if he was not in the castle de Albani. The man nodded assent, and his countenance indicated a strong expression of grief. "I must remove from hence to-morrow, Joseph," said the master, "if it is even to a cottage: if we can find no untenanted habitation near our late abode, you must seek in some other place. But I do not wish to travel far—I am not capable of the exertion."

Joseph assured him of his obedience; and the misanthrope hinting that he would endeavour to take a little rest, the farmer and some of the peasants who had accompanied him hither, quitted the room, being previously assured that the gentleman's liberality would keep pace with his gratitude. Before he left the castle, Pietro enquired of the servant by what appellation his master ought to be addressed. Joseph hesitated for a few moments, and then replied that the name of the gentleman he served was Signor Claudio. When Pietro returned home, the conversation naturally turned on the late event. The worthy man rejoiced that heaven had made him the humble instrument of saving the lives of two of his fellow creatures. He said, for the future he should always give some degree of credit to forewarnings, for that certainly on the preceding night, something unaccountable, a sensation he could not define, in a manner impelled him to return to his own village. Lubin observed that Signor Claudio was certainly no stranger to the interior of the castle, and that being there greatly distressed his mind: an agitation that must of course result from events long since past, as he had resided in the house now burnt down above nine years. "That he has, most certainly," said the farmer's wife, "for I recollect my lord count left the castle with his principal domestics, the very day previous to the birth of our Jannette, who is now ten years and some months; I stood at the window to see them pass, and I could not avoid remarking how melancholy our noble landlord looked: they said he was going all the way to Venice, where he had an estate left him by his godfather; for he had taken a dislike to the castle, because his parents both died there. Now I must own, I thought that accounting thus for his leaving the castle,

was very strange, for my lady, who died last of the noble pair, had then been buried above a year and a half: but that is neither here nor there to what we were talking on. My lord count had been gone about ten months, when the man whom we have since known by the name of Joseph, came up to me as I stood at the door with the infant in my arms, and inquired if I knew of ever a creditable house to let: I told him there was one at the extremity of the village, near the park gate, belonging to the castle, which had long stood empty, by reason of a report that was circulated by the last family that inhabited it, of its being haunted in a most shocking manner, and so I dare say it was: but that did not deter him from going to look at it, and he said it would suit his master exactly; and I directed him to Anselmo to make the agreement, which was soon completed; for in less than a fortnight the signor came there, and the old dame Kircher was hired to wait on them."

"Pshaw!" interrupted the farmer, "My dear Maude all that you have said is only the old story over again; which we know as well as yourself. Nay, do not look cross, place us another flask on the table, and let us drink to the health of count Albani, our noble landlord." Maude smiled and pledged him. "His lordship," said she, when she had completed her draught, "may be a main good sort of a man, for all the evil reports that go against him." "Silence, silence my dear wife," said the farmer, "never resume that subject again, I entreat you; slander and malice have quick wings—not one word of that horrid story may be true, and if so, we might do much injury to an innocent man: and on the other side of the question, if he was really the wretch that has been represented to us, we ought to have more regard to ourselves and family, than to mention it—he is rich and powerful—we are but like worms on the face of the creation, compared to him, and he could crush us in an instant: the more so, as being his tenants places us more particularly in his power."

Maude subscribed to the justice of his remarks, and their conversation again turned on the Signor Claudio, whom they supposed from his expressions at the castle, to belong to the Albani family, but in what manner it was not possible for them to conjecture, and therefore they resolved to dismiss the subject for one less involved in

mystery. The next day Pietro was busy—but Lubin went to the castle to enquire after the signor and his servant: he found the latter not much worse in his usual health, from fright and fatigue. But the signor was seriously indisposed, so much so, that his removal was impossible. Joseph was in deep affliction, lest death, as he said, should deprive him of one who had been for many years his master, friend, and indeed brother to him. Anselmo was gone to Montreal to purchase provisions of that sort that the live stock about the castle did not supply, according to his weekly custom. Beatrice was busy at work, and Margaret was fretting that the strangers could not leave the castle, and severely blaming herself for granting them shelter. "I hate," continued she, "to seem always ill natured, and give denials when asked a favour. But the count's orders for me to keep myself to myself, and visitors of all kinds from the castle, were so strict, that I tremble to disobey him. This is the worst trespass I ever made—what would become of me should his lordship come?"

"I hope, for your sake," said the compassionate Lubin, "that he will not take it in his head to come here, and indeed 'tis rather unlikely that he should, after such a long absence. I wish I had such a huge fine building as this, and half as much gold as the count has—the poor traveller, and my distressed tenants should never sue in vain for a shelter under my roof. By St. Martin, it should resemble an hospital." "Aye, aye, (muttered old Margaret) fine talking—fine talking. But I know the count, should he become acquainted with what I have done, will not thank me for making his chateau an hospital: would the doors were once closed on this Signor Claudio." Lubin returned with the intelligence of the signor's illness to his father, and concluded the account of his morning's visit, by raising a hearty laugh at Margaret and her fears: which however turned out not to be without foundation, and were soon verified. Claudio and his servant had been three days at the castle, and every hour the former seemed to grow worse: when a messenger arrived at the castle with an express, stating that the count and three attendants might be expected the next day at the castle, where he should not remain more than a week, so had not brought any other domestics than his valet, the coachman and a groom. This determina-

tion to come to Albani had been so sudden, that he had no time to give further notice: not that he was much apprehensive of not being properly accommodated, as he knew the old woman always had a chamber in readiness, which, with his dressing room and one small parlour, would serve very well during his stay; and if there was not time to prepare chambers for the men, they must sleep at an inn.

The man, having delivered his message and taken such refreshment as Margaret's larder afforded, left the castle to meet the count at an inn, where he had been ordered to return to. This intelligence almost drove Anselmo and his wife distracted; they were fearful of losing a situation that afforded them a most comfortable asylum in their old age. Joseph participated in their fears, and assured them, that he knew his master would not for many reasons wish to meet the count, or even have it known that he had been under his roof. Indeed the man asserted, that the signor would rather give half his fortune than the lord de Albani should enter his presence. What was to be done? Anselmo, his wife, Joseph and Pietro, sat in council. To remove the signor from the castle was not to be thought of; but he could not remain in the count's chamber. There was a suite of rooms immediately over the kitchen, which had long been disused; they were from their situation free from damp, and tolerably commodious. The furniture was not in so bad a state as might have been expected from the long neglect in which they had lain: a few hours labour rendered them clean and comfortable, and that the signor and his servant might not suffer from damp bedding, the good farmer supplied them with what they wanted from his own house. The signor was removed and placed under the following restrictions:—not to come down the stairs, for any thing: for Margaret would visit them every night after the count and his servants were safe in bed, and see what they wanted. Joseph was to be careful to keep every door leading into their apartments properly secured against intruders; and not to light their lamps or tapers, without first cautiously closing the shutters, and letting down the thick damask curtains, that no gleam might betray them to the count or his servants. The arrival of the count at this period was a distressing circumstance to Joseph, who wished to be present when the ruins were re-

moved, to search for two iron chests, which contained considerable property, and valuable papers of his master: which fortunately he always had the precaution to keep secured in the manner above mentioned. But Pietro and his eldest son taking this charge upon themselves, he became much easier, declaring that neither himself or the signor had the least doubt of their fidelity, and as a further proof of their confidence, desired that the farmer would remove whatever property they might find to their own habitation, and keep it till they could leave the castle and seek another dwelling, their late one being completely devastated by the flames. How the fire originated they could not discover, nor had they the least clue to suspicion or conjecture.

It was near six in the evening when the count arrived at the castle, from which he had been absent above ten years. Anselmo was ready with Margaret at the portal to receive their lord. He was now in his thirty-eighth year, tall and of a commanding aspect; he had once possessed the utmost advantages of person. This was certainly not an age to lessen these exterior attractions: yet his form was wasted, his eyes looked sunk and heavy, and his face was of a pallid death-like hue. The aged pair shrunk back, and regarded each other with a significant glance that seemed to say—How vastly altered. He slightly nodded to the congratulations they uttered on his unexpected arrival, and hurried to his dressing room, which adjoined his bedchamber, both situated in the first gallery of the western wing. The next day Margaret was ordered into his presence: she went with some trepidation, lest he should have made any discovery to her prejudice, such is the fear ever allied to the consciousness of having done wrong. He fixed his eyes steadfastly on her as she entered—"Lady Juliana, Margaret, how is her health?" The old woman sighed forth—"She is better now than she has been for some time past, yet she is but the shadow of her former self: she has long since appeared perfectly resigned to her fate; she says the world is nothing new to her, she has no wish to re-enter a place where all she had dear is no more, and she must repeatedly meet with incidents to remind her of their loss: she does not give way to useless repining, at least not when I am present. I always find her employed at work, reading, drawing or music; she seldom avails her-

self of your permission to walk in those private parts of the ground pointed out; though she frequently exercises herself among the galleries and apartments of the castle, which indeed are spacious enough—indeed I think she would pass the rest of her days very tranquilly, if a circumstance she much dreads should not occur." Here Margaret paused: "Name that circumstance," said the count, "you doubtless are apprised of it."—"I will not deny such knowledge, my lord," said the old woman, "yet I fear your anger."—"Pshaw," said the count, "away with this trifling; I shall not blame you for what lady Juliana has uttered."

"Then, my lord, since I must speak, she says, your hated presence would destroy her; she was once most happy in the thoughts that you did not mean to return here any more: the years that have elapsed favoured this supposition: but now she is near sinking under terror and apprehension, lest you should seek an interview with her."

"You have then informed her of my coming here." "I have, my lord: indeed, I did so as soon as I was apprised of your intention, that she might not be suddenly surprised, as there was but little room to doubt but she must see you from the windows, and it might have proved her death; but now she is somewhat prepared."—"In which part of the chateau does Lady Juliana now reside?"—She has for these two years past inhabited the apartments that were your lady mother's, over the chapel. But when she found you was coming, she removed to the north turret, the part you originally assigned her. There, as she says, is but one entrance, and that she hopes to keep secured against you."—"Years then has not subdued her avowed hatred, Margaret."—"No," my lord, "but it has increased; she says, she forgives, but cannot for the life of her forget, her injuries."—"You appear, Margaret," said De Albani, "to be much attached to the lady."—"I am indeed, my lord, her mild behaviour and kindness has won my heart; yet, my lord, I did not swerve from my fidelity to you." "One question more, Margaret, and I have done. Is it true, that the child is dead; was I not deceived in that?" "Her coffin, my lord count, in which she was placed, lies in the same vault with the remains of your noble ancestors; If you will go there, Anselmo will accompany you, and point it out. Indeed, its freshness from the rest, and its size will make it obvious to you."

The count gave an involuntary shudder, and waved his hand for Margaret to withdraw. She did not see him again for three days, when she suddenly met him as she came out of the dairy-house. He ordered her to follow him to his dressing-room. "Margaret," said his lordship, "I shall charge you with a letter to Lady Juliana, see that you speedily deliver it, and bring me an answer." "My lord," said the trembling Margaret, "she ordered me never to—." "You are my servant," said the count, "and I will be obeyed." Margaret still hesitated: Albani rose from his seat exclaiming, "Either act according to my orders, or I will this instant repair to the entrance of the north turret, and force an entrance; it is not the weak barrier in which she fancies herself secure, that shall prevent me from once more seeing that inexorable woman; neither time nor absence has yet extinguished my passions. Let her beware how she acts, lest she should be made the victim of her own cruelty; and you, Margaret, remember your promise, nothing less than the full performance will satisfy me." Margaret sighed, and taking the letter withdrew. She repaired to the north turret, and having given the usual signal was admitted; she presented the letter to Lady Juliana, saying: "I could not avoid taking it; indeed, indeed I could not, or worse would have come of it; you know, my dear lady, how violent the count's temper is." "Let what will come of it," said the lady, to use your expression; "I will not read it, I will take every precaution against seeing him. But if he will persist in forcing himself into my presence, let the consequence be on his own head, Heaven will surely acquit me, when thus drove by his wickedness to the last extremity." Margaret endeavoured by every argument she could devise, to alter the lady's resolution; but the effort was vain, and she was forced to return with it to the count. He was however absent, and she understood from the valet, that he had rode out, attended by a groom, to inspect the village, and see what alterations it had undergone during his absence. This did not add a little to the old woman's apprehensions of a discovery. Pietro had undertaken to silence the villagers in respect of the misanthrope's being conveyed to the castle; but she was under the most painful tortures of mind till his return, when she was relieved by hearing that the farmer's was the only house he had stopped at, nor had he conversed with any one in the village except Pietro's

family. The count received back his unopened letter with unequalled fury: Margaret attempted to appease him; but he drove her from him with the most horrid execrations. The count had now been at the castle four days, but Margaret heard nothing said concerning his departure, which gave her great uneasiness on account of signor Clandio, who still remained in a state of severe indisposition; and it was utterly impossible to admit a medical man to visit him: this, however, gave no uneasiness to the signor, who was skilled in physic and surgery, having during his voluntary seclusions, studied it as a resource against *ennui*, and had long been accustomed to prescribe for himself. But Joseph, who had never seen him so ill before, much more for such a length of time, was seriously uneasy, and grieved much that his master could not have the attendance he deemed necessary. But Joseph was not aware, that in fact no medicine could effectually relieve his loved master: this was the disease of a perturbed mind, the violent agitations attending on which communicated itself to his enfeebled frame, and his present residence brought with it a train of reflections highly distressing to his mind. Joseph had only been admitted to the partial confidence of his master. He knew that he had been unfortunate, that he had lost his nearest relations by treachery, but he knew no more.

The apartments in which Clandio and his servant were placed, consisted of a suite of seven rooms; they had formerly been used as a nursery for the children of the Albani family: here were two stair cases, one that descended to the kitchen, and another that led to a small grated door which opened into a laurel and citron grove, and from thence to the park: in the further apartment was a door that opened into the gallery of the north wing of the castle, near the spiral stair case, that led to the turret where the unfortunate Juliana wasted her lingering days. The great clock of the castle had tolled the midnight hour, all around was silent. The signor, who was too restless to sleep, had thrown on a night gown and sat reading; Joseph was in bed enjoying a profound slumber. The count had gone to his chamber above two hours since, and Margaret had paid her accustomed visit with a basket of provisions, and the medicines that Lubin had

fetched from Montreal, and privately conveyed to the castle, according to the previous arrangements.

Clandio was a man of taste and literature, well versed in Greek, Latin, and five living languages: but he excelled in the English, and the elegance with which he pronounced and wrote his native Italian. He was deeply interested in one of Shakespeare's tragedies, when his ears were assailed by a loud and piercing shriek: he could scarce credit his senses, till the terrific sound was repeated, and struggling was heard close to the door that opened into the gallery of the castle: down went the volume, and snatching up his sword which lay on a sofa by him, he moved towards the door, and plainly distinguished a female voice plaintively intreating for mercy. He hesitated no longer; compassion for the sufferer made him forgetful of his own situation, and the terms on which he had been permitted to stay in the castle: another shriek nerved his aged arm, and he soon succeeded in forcing open the door. On entering the gallery, he found a lady opposing the entrance of a person (whom he soon recognized as the count de Albani) to the turret: her strength was nearly exhausted, and she appeared to have suffered many bruises in the struggle, and one of her arms was severely lacerated by coming in contact with the lock of the door.

The noise which the signor had unavoidably made, caused the count to turn hastily round, "What means," said he, "this intrusion? Who are you that thus dare—" They met, their eyes encountered each other—de Albani started back, horror and affright seemed to take possession of his soul—he had unsheathed his dagger, but it dropt from his hand, which shook as with a palsy—he reclined against a statue for a few moments, as if to calm his sensations, but the effort was vain, and he sank senseless to the floor; when his head coming in contact with the foot of another statue, he received a contusion, which retarded his recovery from stupefaction. Anselmo, his wife, and the attendants for whom beds had been provided, slept in the opposite wing of the castle, therefore no alarm was given by the noises that had been made.

"Will you, my gracious preserver, free me from this worst of human beings?" said the weeping Juliana: "heaven surely sent you here—say can you take me hence, before this precious opportunity is lost to us? The count

will recover, and then I have to fear the worst; both for myself and you, who have so kindly interested yourself for a hapless stranger." The signor intreated her to follow him, at the same time asking her if there was any other person whom she wished to accompany her in leaving the castle, which they must immediately do.

Lady Juliana replied in the negative: "Thank heaven," rejoined she, "my child, my Isabella is not here." At the mention of Isabella, the signor gave a convulsive start: she did not observe him, but followed in silence to the room where Claudio led the way. He instantly awoke Joseph, (who had slept uninterrupted by the late bustle) and made him comprehend the necessity there was for quitting the chateau, in treating him to dress with all expedition, and collect what few articles were worth taking with him: ensuring the necessity of haste, not only on their account, but that assistance might be sent to De Albani, who was certainly much, if not dangerously, hurt by his fall. "He is a vile man," continued the signor, "and I fear even viler than I used to think him: I do not wish to punish him, I leave that to an omniscient being, whose power is infinite, and far beyond our weak comprehension: we must not suffer him to perish: happy should I be in hearing that he was awakened to a just sense of his crimes, and to sincere repentance. This can only be proved by his abstaining from a repetition of his cruelties, and making every reparation that fate has left in his power for the past." They were soon ready to quit the castle, lady Juliana put on a large travelling coat of the signors, and they descended into the kitchen, from whence, by a door that opened into the court yard, they left the edifice: but here a difficulty occurred that rendered them almost hopeless of escaping: the gates were fast closed and locked; to force them was impossible. They had intended, as soon as they could free themselves from the castle, to send Joseph back to ring the bell of the count's chamber with violence, this would give an alarm that might bring de Albani's domestics to a knowledge of his situation, and Joseph might follow them to the farmers with the utmost expedition. They intended to repair thither for the present, as it was impossible for them to gain any other place that held out a prospect of safety, till they were better provided for travelling: as they were now in hazard of being brought back to the

castle, and exposed to the most intolerable hardships that his unjust revenge could inflict. Their plan was now frustrated in regard to sending Joseph back. They could not pass the gates, and to add to their terror and distress, they beheld lights moving past the windows of the western wing, a convincing proof that the domestics had been alarmed: fear added to their speed: they crossed the court-yard, and passing under an archway entered the spacious gardens, which they proceeded through till they came to the park, the gates of which were equally guarded with those they had tried before; they crept round by the wall, and were so far fortunate as to discover a small wooden door, which yielded to the united efforts of the signor and his servant, and they found themselves at liberty to pursue their way to the farmer's; in whose fidelity, were they able to reach the house without interruption, they had no doubt. As they proceeded on, they passed the ruins of the signor's late habitation: he cast a look on them, and heaved a deep sigh of regret. "I enjoyed," said he, "much calm seclusion there, but I ought not to repine at an event, which sent me to your rescue."

"My obligations to you are very great," said the lady; "had you not interfered, dispair would have prompted me to a dreadful act. From the words I have heard you utter, I cannot suppose signor, that you are a friend of De Albani; it is therefore strange, that you were in the castle, apparently residing there. The service you have rendered me, makes me anxious to know to whom I am thus indebted." The signor heaved a deep sigh. "My story is long, and the occurrences that have for the most part marked my days, have been of a tragical nature: such as even, on bare recalling to the mind, brings with it sensations of horror that enervates the soul. At present I would wish to be spared the recital; a few days may perhaps remove my repugnance to oblige you, for it depends entirely on circumstances, that I trust may enable me to do so. The ruins you just beheld were occasioned by a fire; it was my dwelling. By the humanity of those who came to my aid, I was conveyed to the castle." The signor continued his discourse, by explaining the circumstance that had kept him there; and his desire of being acquainted with the events that had placed her in a situation so apparently perilous, as the one from which his interference had rescued her. This she promised at the first opportunity that pre-

sented itself. As they had walked very fast, fearful of pursuit, they now arrived at the door of the farm-house; it was near two of the morning, and they had some difficulty to gain an entrance from Lubin, who at length answered their repeated knocks; he being very apprehensive of the banditti, who of late had made several depredations in the environs. When he heard what they had to relate, he paid them the utmost attention. He repaired to his father, and acquainted him with the circumstance. He soon came down to the parlour with Maude; and they busied themselves in accommodating their unexpected guests: they had fortunately two spare bed-rooms in the upper story of the house; one was appropriated to Lady Juliana, whose appearance excited the utmost surprise, her person not being unknown to them, though they had long since believed her dead; and the other to the signor; Lubin kindly offered Joseph a share of his bed, which was accepted. Indeed, the farmer's abode was the seat of true benevolence and disinterested goodness.

In the meantime, the utmost confusion took place at the chateau. The count recovered from the stupefaction, occasioned by his fall and terror, soon after the fugitives had left the interior of the castle. He was so much hurt as to be scarcely able to rise. He at length regained his own apartment, by tottering through the galleries and along the corridor with the utmost difficulty. He then rang the bell that led to the room where his valet lay, who happening to be awake, answered the summons as quick as possible, supposing from an hour so unusual to require his attendance, that his master had been attacked with some sudden indisposition; a circumstance that of late years had frequently occurred in the night. He was horror-struck on entering the count's chamber, to find him on the floor, weltering in the blood that flowed profusely from his head. He tried to lift him up, but the effort was useless; he could not effect it by his own strength; he was loath to leave him in such a state, but there was no alternative; and he went to arouse the rest of the domestics: in his way to their apartments, which lay at a considerable distance from the western wing, he had, from necessity, to pass along the corridor and gallery, through which the count had just come; he perceived traces of blood all the way, which gave a fresh turn to his suppositions. He had at first conceived that the count had got out of bed to ring for him, and be-

ing taken by a kind of swoon, had fell and struck his head against some hard substance. His apprehensions, that something of an uncommon nature had occurred, was confirmed when he came to the gallery and saw a quantity of blood at the feet of one of the statues; an opposite door burst open, and a light burning in a distant chamber: this was a taper that Joseph in his haste had forgot to extinguish. Raymond (the valet) directed his steps thither; and discovered to his surprise, that these suite of apartments had been recently inhabited; and, as the beds testified, by more than one person. He passed through the rooms, and going from thence down stairs to the kitchen, he found the door leading into the court-yard, as before described, half open. Raymond had something of cowardice in his disposition, that now operated most powerfully on his feelings, and prevented his proceeding further, lest his own person should be endangered; and he hastened back to the gallery with the utmost expedition, blaming himself for so long neglecting his master, through a curiosity into which he had been led by surrounding circumstances of so horrid and suspicious an aspect. He hastened up a small stair-case that led to the apartments appropriated to the use of the domestics, and gave the required alarm. Himself, the groom, and Margaret, were soon in the apartment of the count, Raymond having ordered Anselmo to descend to the kitchen and secure the door, without staying to give any reason for a command, which seemed strange to those unacquainted with what the valet had witnessed.

The count, faint with loss of blood, and the exertions he had made in returning to his chamber, had fallen senseless the very instant he had rang the bell for Raymond; nor had he recovered when the valet and the other domestic entered the chamber. There was neither surgeon nor apothecary nearer than Montreal, at least a distance of thirtee miles from the castle; and to leave his lordship with hi wound unattended to, till a practitioner of the healing a could be fetched, was utterly impossible, without depriving him of life, as his wound still bled profusely. Raymon therefore, assisted by Margaret, made the applications the had seen resorted to in cases somewhat similar, and ha pily with the desired success. The wound was not so dee as they expected; they bound it up, and the count bein placed in bed, soon recovered to a recollection of the pas

and the first words he used was a command, that Anselmo and Margaret should be closely confined, and in separate rooms, so that they could hold no discourse with each other; and to let them be supplied at proper intervals with their meals, till he was able and at leisure to examine them on the charge of abusing the confidence reposed in them, if not concerned in deeper crimes; his orders were obeyed with the utmost promptitude. The man submitted in sullen silence; not so his wife—she struggled and made the most ardent protestations, that she had done nothing to harm her lord; and praying him to countermand his orders. No one heeded her intreaties, and she was soon made a solitary prisoner in her own chamber, where she gave way to a mixture of frantic rage and sorrow.

The count ordered one of the grooms to remain by his bed-side, while Raymond with the other was to investigate the castle, and if they found any person or persons there, to use their utmost efforts to detain them, let them be of whatever rank or description they would, as he would answer for the consequences that might result from such a proceeding. Raymond assured him that his orders should be literally obeyed, as far as regarded the search, but he feared with little prospect of success. The count desired an explanation; which the man gave, by accurately describing in what state he had found the castle on his going to alarm the servants. "Search, however," said De Albani, much agitated: "but if you find no one in the castle, let there be no pursuit, or you shall answer it at your peril." The men withdrew, and when they were out of hearing, observed, that the count might have spared the threat with which he concluded the last sentence, as they had not the least inclination to venture out at such an hour, and in such a place.

Their search was, as Raymond predicted, of no avail; and they returned to the count's room, where they sat till long after the morning's dawn, when one of the grooms went off to Montreal for a surgeon, as De Albani complained much of his head. Beatrice had slept in a remote room over the dairy, and was not in the least acquainted with the transactions of the preceding night. Raymond merely informed her the count had met with an accident, and Anselmo, with his wife, having incurred his displeasure, where they were at present, till the affair should be investigated, deprived of liberty. This young girl being wholly inade-

quate to the domestic affairs, without the superintendance of Margaret, Raymond intreated the count to let him hire some female from the village to assist them. But he would not hear of this proposal, saying, he should quit the castle the first day his head would permit him; and, till then, would put up with any inconvenience, sooner than have strangers about him: experience had taught him, no dependance could be placed on domestics, who had for years resided under his roof; much less could he trust others.

In a few days he was so far recovered as to sit in his dressing-room, and examine Anselmo and his wife respecting the persons who had been admitted, contrary to his express orders, into the castle. The count on first perceiving the features of the signor, had mistaken them for the apparition of a person whom he had injured in the deepest manner, and even consigned to a premature death; this idea occasioned a swoon. On his recovery, he recollected the bursting open of the door, and became convinced that the interruption he had received was from an earthly substance, and not an aerial shade. When he recovered, so far as to be able to leave his chamber, he accompanied Raymond in an investigation through the apartments that the signor and Joseph had occupied. This confirmed him in the opinion of the person he supposed long since dead being in existence; his conscience had been burthened with the crime of murder, that was lessened by the assurance that the person had escaped the assassination intended; but not removed it, for though the act had not been perpetrated, his intention had been the same—Could he hope that the being whom he had so deeply injured would not seek revenge? 'Tis true, years had elapsed, and his wrongs had been buried in silence. But he had now a fresh provocation; he had obtained lady Juliana under his protection, and she had a tale to tell would harrow up his soul. While he was thus immerged in painful reflection, a thought occurred, that determined him to see Margaret instantly, and know how long the being he most dreaded had resided in the castle, and by what means he had corrupted Margaret from her duty; for he, in spite of the events that had occurred, had no mean opinion of her fidelity. He commanded her to be brought from her chamber to his dressing-room, where he strictly interrogated her with respect to the persons she had harboured in

the castle; telling her, that she could alone hope for his pardon for the injury she had done him, by a true confession of the motives that led her to such an act of disobedience. This Margaret did with minute exactness; he made no comments on what she said; but sent for Anselmo, and addressed him in much the same words as he had used to Margaret. Anselmo's account was exactly the same. The count found much to extenuate their fault, and much to blame. However, as they had used every precaution to keep the signor from the knowledge that there was such a person in the castle, he forgave them, but his pardon was accompanied by a severe reprimand, and they were then set at liberty to pursue their usual occupations.

It was then certain, that this supposed signor had resided near the castle for nine years in peaceful seclusion, without seeking either revenge or justice: but he must now expect both, for he would not for worlds, could he have prevented it, let him heard Juliana's story. He was undetermined, whether to leave the castle and return to Venice, or prolong his stay: at length he resolved on the latter, till he procured some certain intelligence respecting lady Juliana and her protector. He caused private enquries to be made at every probable place that his mind could suggest; but could neither trace nor hear the least tidings of the fugitives: this led him to conjecture, that they could not have quitted the village. But where in that, was a shelter place for persons of their rank. 'Tis true, they might for the present banish particularity in that respect. The farmer's occurred to him as the most probable, both on account of the commodiousness of the dwelling, and the services Pietro had rendered the signor. He communicated his thoughts to Raymond, who, for the sake of gain, had become the pliant tool of his master, and a willing instrument in his schemes.

Raymond accordingly paid several visits to the farmhouse. It was what they expected, and were well prepared for him; the result of his observations were, a firm belief that the signor and lady Juliana had not been there. The count soon grew weary of residing at the castle; especially as he could obtain no tidings of the fugitives. He therefore returned to Venice with his servants; after causing most of the castle to be locked up from access, and giving the old pair a more strict charge than ever to admit

no person further than the apartment in which they resided themselves.

The departure of the count inspired lady Juliana with almost new life. Herself and the signor had both been very ill since they were at the farmer's; they had remained closely immured in two small chambers, and the kind family had taken the most successful measures to conceal their being there. The signor and the lady had each a strong wish to quit Albani as soon as possible; lest they should by any chance be seen by some emissiaries of the count's, whom they supposed would be on the watch for them. The first day lady Juliana had strength to leave her chamber, she repaired to that of the signor, who was sitting up, being considerably better. After some preliminary discourse, the lady gave the following history of herself to her attentive protector.

"I am the only child of the Count de Veronica and the Countess Josepha, who was youngest sister to the late Count de Albani, and aunt to the present; who of course is my first cousin. He has not, alas! acted the part of a relation to me, but has been, under the pretence of violent love, my fellest foe, and has brought me to the very verge of despair. My father having espoused lady Josepha against the consent of her friends, who wished to unite her to the Duke de Monpensir, a French nobleman, no intimacy was kept up between them; and my mother was, to the day of her death, as a stranger to her family; a circumstance that she often regretted amidst the felicity of the happiest union ever known on earth. In her last moments she expressed the utmost sorrow at the inexorable anger of her family; particularly that of her father and her eldest brother, one of whom she particularly loved; she thought it hard that he should be equally obstinate with the rest."

"'Twas hard indeed," sighed the signor; "and her brother was much to blame."

Lady Juliana continued; "My dear mother," said she, "expired in the very prime of life and beauty; her virtues may be equalled, but not excelled. Her attachment to her own relations was sincere, and wholly disinterested: for her father, though he withheld forgiveness, presented her with a portion suitable to her illustrious birth and descent. My father, the Count de Veronica, could not support the loss of her he loved; he drooped like a floweret torn from

its native stem, and in a few months rested under the same tomb. Thus was I left an orphan in my sixteenth year, under the guardianship of my father's brother, who succeeded to his title and estates; the personal property of which my father and mother died possessed was mine; and I was accounted one of the wealthiest heiresses in the Italian states. My guardian was a widower, his lady was but recently deceased; he had a daughter about five years older than myself, who superintended his domestic affairs, and sat at the head of his table. She was plain in her person, but very agreeable; and her heart was the seat of benevolence and virtue: unhappily for her peace, she was of too ardent a temper—she either loved or hated without medium: and the impression of a first sight had a great weight with her, and she would hardly allow her eyes to be opened to the conviction of subsequent proofs, to the contrary of what she had at the commencement of their acquaintance imbibed. Theodora strove to make their house a most comfortable abode to me: by the will of my father, I was obliged to reside with my uncle till the age of twenty-one, when I was to be independently my own mistress, and to take possession of a splendid mansion at Pisa, where I had frequently been. There were also these conditions annexed: If I married, I was free from my uncle's power; and if he died, he had no right to appoint another guardian, and I was left entirely to my own guidance; for my father had ever the most favourable opinion of my prudence and stability of sentiments. The latter event took place; my uncle did not survive my twentieth year. I did not relish the thoughts of living alone; I therefore proposed to Theodora that we should reside together six months at Pisa, and the other half of each year at Genoa, where her principal estate lay. At my house, I was to superintend domestic arrangements; my cousin to do the same at her own. This way of life passed on most agreeably for fifteen months, during which several incidents occurred of a remarkable nature.

"My cousin Manfred, the present Count de Albani, of a sudden became our guest. His father and mother died about the same period with my own; and within the last year they had been followed to the grave, both by his grandfather and his uncle, his father's elder brother, and he had succeeded to the hereditary honors. His was a self-introduction; he commenced by regretting the distance

that had for so many years subsisted between two such nearly allied branches of a noble family, and urging that his wishes were centred in the hope, that for the future we should meet as became two members of the same family; to this I readily agreed, and without a thought beyond what was due to our near affinity, for my heart was seriously engaged to the Count Justin St. Alva, by whom I was equally beloved; but our intention of an union for life had not publicly transpired, through, perhaps, an over delicacy on my part. Theodora, by a hapless fatality, had as yet never been addressed by any youth whom she was the least inclined to favour. She beheld my cousin Manfred, and her heart was no longer in her own keeping; she looked and loved: I soon saw through the veil she put on to conceal her sentiments, being ashamed of avowing that the Count de Albani's, without any solicitations on his part. To me she at length confessed her love. I did not encourage it, representing with all the energy I possessed, the danger of such an attachment; however amiable she was, he might never be induced to select her, as he could have no knowledge of her favourable regard for him, unless she condescended to give him a hint on that subject; at the bare idea of which, I was certain her delicacy would revolt, as unworthy of a woman who wished a man to esteem her. Indeed, I had heard several sketches of the count's levity, that rendered such a step highly improper, lest he might be inclined to presume unjustly on an avowed partiality.

"She paid much attention to what I said, and promised to use every effort to conquer an attachment that seemed hopeless. From that day she mentioned him no more; and whenever he entered any room where she was, either at home or on a visit, she seized the first pretence for retiring. But this conduct, instead of having the effect she first intended, and I sincerely wished, seemed to increase her passion, and despondency seized her ardent mind. She had frequent fits of absence, and would sit whole days in her own apartment, and access was denied even to me; when she did join in any party a smile was never seen to illume her once animated countenance. She grew pallid, her eyes lost their lustre, and I was apprehensive of a decline. I grieved for my dear Theodora, but knew not how to act. I confess, that such was my confidence in the Count de Alva's honour, that I made him my

confidant in this very delicate affair, and solicited his advice. He thanked me for this proof of my esteem, and thus continued, 'I believe, from what knowledge I have of the count, your cousin, he is far from any honourable engagements with your sex. The lady Theodora is wealthy, genteel in person, accomplished and amiable; was he acquainted with her prepossessions, he assuredly would act as every man of honour ought to do in such a case, and ensure both her happiness and his own; as he might rest secure in the affections of his wife, who had thus imbibed a partiality purely from the dictates of her own heart, and not biassed by interest, but affection. How to apprize the count of this circumstance, in a manner suitable to the delicate modesty of my cousin Theodora, was puzzling: both the parties were nearly related to me; one on my father's, the other on my mother's side. I wished to serve both, and render them equally happy; but I was more attached to Theodora than to Manfred, and with reason, for my female cousin was much more amiable than the count. My lover persuaded me to break the matter myself to D'Albani. His reasons appeared just, and with some reluctance I undertook to inform him that he was honored in Theodora's affections.

He was a visitor at an earlier hour than usual the next morning. I was sitting reading, and my cousin was at her embroidering: after some desultory conversation, I arose and intreated Manfred's company in my *boudoir*. I said I had some communication to make respecting some money due to me from the D'Albani estates. He accompanied me; his looks betraying an earnestness that confused me; and was it the confession of my own attachment that I was going to make, it could scarce have added to my terror: I gradually unfolded to him the purpose for which I had desired a private conference, dwelling much on her virtues and extreme goodness of heart. He suffered me to finish my discourse without the least interruption: when I had concluded, he still retained a mortifying silence; I felt hurt, and with some impatience demanded a reply: a boisterous laugh followed, and I was going to leave the room with indignation. He gently drew me back—then casting himself at my feet, said, "Can my charming cousin, my dearest Juliana, suppose for a moment that Theodora has the least interest in my heart?—No, beloved girl, my affections are only your's—and I flatter myself

they are returned—'tis you, not your cousin, by whose partiality I am honoured. You have resorted to that innocent stratagem, to discover the state of my sentiments, and thus avow them—my heart is unalienably yours. We have no friends whose consent is requisite; but we are independently free to follow the dictates of our mutual affection. Surprise kept me silent; to which he gave a wrong interpretation. "I will retire now, my dear Josepha," said the count, "in pity to your blushes and sweet confusion, which fills my bosom with transport, till now unknown." He was going; I made an effort to recover myself. "Stay, my lord, you have deceived yourself, and we must not part without an explanation." His countenance changed, and with eager haste he intreated me to ease his suspense; I did so, by an assurance that I never could be his, and that what I had said respecting Theodora was literally true; adding, that I hoped he would not give me cause to repent the confidence I had reposed in him, or trifle with the feelings of that amiable girl. His answer shocked me! he placed her in a most ridiculous light, and vowed she was his aversion.

"She overheard some words as she stood at the door, that convinced her I had already commenced the discourse, and she was indeed the subject. She was never able after to quit her chamber, and in four months my truly unfortunate cousin died. By her will she stipulated, that I should give away a certain annual sum among females of the following descriptions: prudent married woman, deserted by their husbands; single women, who had placed their affections where there was no hope of a return; and those more unfortunate ones, who had been seduced and deserted, and whose contrition and prudence was such as to prevent them from deviating further from the paths of virtue, and were plunged into distress, from which they wanted some friendly hand to extricate them.

"My cousin had been interred about three months, when I yielded to the intreaties of my dear Justin, and became his wife. Our marriage was publicly declared, and a number of splendid entertainments given on the occasion. During the first year of our marriage I had a son; and eighteen months after that period I was blest with a daughter: no parents could be prouder of their children than me and St. Alva; they added an unspeakable felicity to our union, and we were, in respect of domestic bliss, the happiest among the happy.

"In the fifth year of our union I lost the best of husband's; a sudden illness brought him to the grave, and left me a hapless widow. The Count St. Alva had no relations of his own sex, except De Albani. I had none but very distant ones, I was therefore left sole guardian of my children. St. Alva had been dead but a few months, when my young Justin and his sister had the meazles; the latter soon recovered, but my charming boy fell a victim to this cruel disorder! I was for a long time inconsolable! and had but just recovered to placid composure, when De Albani thought proper to renew his addresses:—he was much piqued at the firmness of a denial, that allowed him not the least room to hope. My Isabella's health was very delicate; and I was not without apprehensions that her loss would be added to the rest of my woes. By the advice of my phycisians I went with her to Montpellier, to try the effects of an air, that is reckoned so salubrious for persons in a declining state. With her it had a most beneficial consequence; her health amended daily, and a charming bloom appeared on her cheeks, and revived a mother's hopes in her only remaining darling.

"I took such a delight in the place, and a select society I had formed at Montpellier, that I prolonged my stay far beyond what I first intended; nor had I fixed a period for my return home, when I received a letter from my steward, at the Villa of Torra Nova, informing me, that my presence there was absolutely necessary, to sign some agreements he had entered into for the benefit of the estates: the circumstances that he stated, appeared so very reasonable and proper, that I determined to adhere to his advice. I ordered the servants to make instant preparations for our journey. All the female domestics, excepting two, who were the immediate attendants on myself and Lady Isabella, had been hired at Montpellier, as servants during our stay, and were now discharged. Blanche and Janette went in the carriage with us, attended only by two footmen and Anthony, my faithful butler. In our way we had to pass through a forest of very great extent, not above twenty miles distant from the Castle of De Albani. This place was more than half way in our journey, and we arrived thus far in safety; the weather being uncommonly fine, and the heat of a proper temperature, we found travelling extremely pleasant. About a mile before we entered the forest, we staid to dine and have a change of horses; the

hour was late, and I began to be apprehensive that we should not be able to clear the forest before it was dark; in which case I held it most advisable to stay where we was, and recommence our journey with the morning's dawn. But the postillion, whom I had called in to speak to, and the men who attended me, with the exception of the butler, who was of my opinion, affirmed that there was more than time sufficient, not only to get through the forest, but to a town five miles beyond it, where excellent accommodation might be had before it was entirely dark. I suffered myself to be convinced by their representations, and in an evil hour we sat out. We had proceeded more than half way through the forest, and was just arrived in the most dreary part of it, when the carriage broke down, and was so seriously damaged, that it was impossible to proceed. I was half distracted with terror and apprehension. The postillion informed me, that about a mile further on was a small but very neat and clean house, where they sold cakes, liquors, wine, and some few other refreshments, for travellers passing through the forest. I ordered the postillion to drive me there; I was accompanied by Anthony, Lady Isabella, and the two women; the footmen remaining to guard our baggage, till another vehicle could be procured to place it in, that we might proceed.

I found the petite umbrage, such as the postillion had described it, humble, yet a perfect attention to cleanliness had been paid, and the owners was civil and diligent. Having seen me accommodated as well as the place would allow, Anthony and the postillion proceeded on horseback to the next town, to procure a carriage. Alas! they returned not. I was fearful that some accident had befallen them; the hostess endeavoured to calm my apprehensions, by saying, it was probable they could not procure a carriage till the morning, when they would return with it: indeed, there was a probability in this conjecture, and I inclined myself to hope that it might be so. The people gave up their own bed-room to me and my Isabella. I had her put to bed, and lay down by her in my clothes, not choosing to undress in such a place. The unpleasantness of my situation kept me long awake; indeed, I had no wish to sleep, but at length I dropped into a slumber, that stole almost unheeded on me. How long I remained in calm repose, I know not; but I was awakened by shrieks and groans, and a combination of horrid sounds. I leaped

from the bed, and too soon discovered the cause of alarm; the house was on fire—I snatched up my sleeping child, and clasping her to my breast, I rushed toward the staircase, which happily was not yet in flames, when I was met by one of my own servants, who had been left with the carriage in the wood. "I saw the fire break out, madam," said he, "and hastened in hopes of giving assistance. Most luckily I have met with an empty travelling chaise, which will convey you and my young lady forward to the next inn; and it can return and take up Blanche and Janette, who are safe; and you may see them at the door and give your orders." There was not an instant to be lost, and I hastened down. I told the women that the chaise should return for them with the utmost expedition. It was a very handsome one with four horses; and I understood from the man who drove it, that he had just been setting his master down at a house near the skirts of the forest, where he had been sent for, by an express, to his father, who was dangerously ill, and with whom he was going to stay till some change took place; and as there was no accommodation for the chaise or horses, it was obliged to return at that very unseasonable hour, through the forest. I thought the man's account very plausible, and congratulated myself on the occurrence of a chance so fortunate. Notwithstanding the bustle that had ensued, and the dear child's being taken from her bed in such alarm and hurry, my Isabella, lulled by the motion of the chaise, soon dropped asleep in my arms. I thought the time in going such a few miles seemed very long, and the road we pursued did not appear to be much used. The vehicle proceeded on at a very quick rate, and I began to form some serious apprenhensions of treachery. Suspicion at length gave way to dreadful certainty: we had come by a lone and seldom frequented way to the Chateau de Albani, and the first on whom I cast my eyes was the count, who approached to hand me from the chaise. I steadily refused to alight; but he, taking advantage of my confusion and distress, seized on my lovely child, and bore her to the interior of the castle: by this stratagem he gained me completely into his power—for a mother's fears prompted me to follow them, and the doors were instantly closed to prevent my escaping thence. He endeavoured to calm my fears, by the most solemn assurances of honourable treatment; at the same time declaring, that now he had ventured so far to obtain

me, he would never restore me to my liberty, unless I gave him my hand.

"Tears, prayers, nor remonstrances, could not turn him from his purpose; and I was equally firm in mine, to suffer any thing rather than become the wife of a man I could not esteem, and who had ensnared me by the most artful contrivances. The letter I had received at Montpellier was not from my steward, but written by the count, who had exactly imitated the old man's hand, and deceived me by the vile forgery. The postillion and the two footmen had been bribed to aid him in these machinations; they had purposely injured the carriage, so as to cause it to break down in the forest. From the little inn they had directed me to, it was thought proper to remove Anthony, as he was not concerned in their plot; this was easily done, by the postillion contriving to get his company to the next town to procure an hired carriage—here he contrived to throw difficulties into his way, that his return might be retarded till late the next morning.

The inn had been purposely fired, and the two young women, our attendants, were in the secret; having been bribed not to contradict the rumours that were to be spread of myself and Lady Isabella having perished in the flames. The people belonging to the inn knew nothing to the contrary, as measures had been resorted to, that the room which I had occupied with my child was completely enveloped in one conflagration before they could ascend the staircase leading to it, rendering it impossible for them to enter or discover that the assertions of Blanche and Janette was false; they pretending they had awakened too late to give me alarm that was requisite to save us. That these young women should act thus, was affording me a strong instance of the ingratitude of which the human mind is capable, as I had ever treated them with kindness and generosity, enabling Blanche to maintain an aged father; and Janette, who (when I first met with her) was a deserted orphan, literally starving in the streets.

"From the count I learnt particulars, which related in the most circumstantial manner, that he had taken every precaution to screen himself, and secure me in his possession. If I consented to be his, he said, it was easy to deceive the world with respect to the report of my fatal end, and account for my safety and disappearance, in a manner that would carry plausibility with it. This, he

said, he would undertake to do: and I did not doubt the cleverness with which he could execute it; for I never knew one possessed of a more fertile imagination than my cousin Manfred. But unhappily his talents was misapplied; I soon found he had an utter aversion to residing at the chateau, which he had but paid very short visits to since it came into his possession. He was now only waiting for my definitive answer, before he quitted it for another residence more agreeable to him.

"Finding his solicitations of no avail, he at length prepared to leave the castle. I was given it to my choice, either to be confined in the north turret, which consisted of three small apartments one above another, or those rooms over the chapel. I choose the former, on account of their being more pleasant and airy than the other. Having settled with Anselmo and his wife in what way I was to be treated, and made them take dreadful oaths not to suffer me nor the child to escape, he left the castle. From several words I had heard the count utter, I was led to conjecture, that the death of my Isabella was an event much wished, lest she should prove, at some future time, an avenger of her mother's wrongs and escape his power. From the crimes he had already committed, and the manner in which he had treated Theodora, I was inclined to believe, that his heart was one, destitute of every finer feeling and sentiment; I trembled for the safety of my child, who every moment became more dear to me, cheering by her innocent prattle many an hour that would otherwise have been dreary in the extreme. Every letter that arrived at the castle filled me with apprehensions, that it might contain orders inimical to her peace or safety. In vain I endeavoured to escape with her; I was too strictly watched; though in every other respect Anselmo and his wife treated me with the tenderest care and attention.

"I had been near a twelvemonth in the castle, when one evening after I had undressed and put my little girl to bed, an office I always performed myself, I sat down by her and viewed her features as she slept; I thought how like they were her dear lamented father's, and I shed tears of pity over her; my lovely Isabella, my darling, the heiress of accumulated wealth, was a captive to a vile relation; her present situation was miserable, though she had not yet discernment to be sensible of it. But to what sorrows might fate yet expose her, was a theme on which I dwelt

with anguish; it called forth all a mother's feelings, and I sat in deeply to meditating, if there was yet no way to be discovered by which I could free myself from my tyrant persecutor. I was interrupted by the entrance of Margaret, who appeared with uplift hands and streaming eyes; these indications of sorrow called forth my pity, and the remembrance of my own woes sank into temporary oblivion while I strove to comfort her. It was some length of time before I could prevail on her to speak. I thought something terrible had happened to Anselmo; at length she shocked me by exclaiming—'Tis for you, dear madam, not for myself, I weep. The count, though he is my master, I pronounce him to be cruel and unjust. He sends me word in this letter, that I am to prepare you for your child's removal from the castle—I shrieked aloud—the old woman continued—indeed, I dreaded to tell you; but it was no use concealing it till the time came. This day fortnight a carriage with attendants will come here, and I am to deliver the young lady to them, as he means her to be placed where she can receive a proper education. O Margaret, I replied, that is all a pretext, to rob me of my darling; but he shall first take my life. Here I went in a convulsive kind of fit, which lasted several hours—ravings succeeded—I was perfectly delirious—the old people tried to soothe me; but I was deaf to all their arguments, till the humanity of Anselmo led him to make a proposal, that promised to avert the threatened separation, and at the same time that himself and wife would not incur the displeasure of the count. I listened to it with avidity, and after it had undergone some alterations, it was adopted. Anselmo, under a pretext that a relation's child had died whilst on a visit to them at the castle, repaired to the next town and had a coffin made to a size suitable to my Isabella: when it was brought home, we took advantage of the child's being asleep, that we might not alarm her, and placed her in the coffin for a few minutes, and then removed her too. This was done as a subterfuge, that the old people might affirm, with a strict regard to truth, that they had placed her in her coffin. It was then filled up with rubbish and closely screwed down. Anselmo replied to the count's letter, that he might countermand the orders given for the carriage and attendants to call for the lady Isabella, as she was no more. She had for some time past been very poorly, but as they did not suppose her to be so

near death as she really was, they had thought it best not to trouble the count on the subject, but contented themselves with doing every thing in their power that could contribute to her amendment: but she expired somewhat suddenly on the day subsequent to the arrival of his letter. They added, that she had been placed in a coffin Anselmo had provided for her, and they had deposited it in the vaults under the chapel, till his pleasure should be known respecting the funeral. I waited his answer with impatience; at length it came, and I found to my extreme satisfaction that he gave credit to the account. But the unfeeling wretch observed, that as it did not suit him to make more persons acquainted with his proceedings than those already in his confidence, he would have no priest admitted to perform the funeral rites—it was therefore to remain at the present as it was. I thus kept my child with me; but in so doing bound myself under stricter obligations than ever; for the old pair would not practice this deceit on their employer, unless I made in their presence a solemn vow, not to leave the castle without the count's death, or his agreeing to that measure, set me at liberty to do so. I however made this exception, that I would at all events endeavour to effect my escape from thence if De Albani should ever dare to molest me, by a renewal of his solicitation. Anselmo and his wife from this time allowed me much more liberty than I had hitherto enjoyed; I resided in what part of the castle I pleased; and they at length got the count to allow of my walking in the retired parts of the ground; and several other indulgences essential to my health and comfort. The education of my daughter afforded me a constant amusement and employ. When I was brought hither, I had with me a valuable casket of jewels; several of these I have since got Anselmo to convert into money for me, and purchase such articles as I wanted to assist me in her education. Her disposition is mild and intelligent; and she exceeded my most ardent expectations, from the want of society and the confined manner in which we lived. Thus the years passed away, when I was shocked at hearing of the count's intention to visit the castle, I agreed with the old people that it was expedient to remove Isabella thence, not only for her own sake, but that of every individual in the affair.

"The dear girl is thoroughly acquainted with the history of her family, and the injustice of Manfred. I gave with

her a statement of the wrongs I have suffered, a few papers I had by me, and the jewels that remained; as I knew not what might happen. But she was to pass under a feigned name, as a distant relation of Anselmo's; and if the count left the castle, and I remained as before, she was to return to me; my oath not allowing us to take advantage of this event to procure our liberation, without I received a fresh insult or provocation from the count. She is placed in a convent at Montreal, as a temporary boarder. I now wish to have her with me, but was fearful of removing while De Albani was near.

"After he had so long relinquished a pursuit, it appears most strange to me that it should now be renewed. He talked much of repentance, and his wishes to release me from such a captivity, which he said he could do by no other means than by receiving my hand, as he dared not otherwise trust to my forgiveness. I had determined not to see him; but he having the artifice to watch for the signal Margaret gave at the door, entrapped me by using the same. My refusals were now more than ever peremptory: he drew forth a dagger, and made use of threats and language that almost distracted me. Heaven only knows to what outrage I might have been exposed, but for your timely interference. Me and my Isabella will always remember you in our orisons to heaven. O, tell me, I beseech you, you most generous stranger, revered old man, to whom I am thus indebted?—You said, you hoped a few days would leave you at liberty to tell me—Can you now ease my anxious heart that feels the greatest interest in you?"

The venerable man shed tears, yet rays of delight illumined his countenance—he clasped her in his arms, with a fervor that might have given alarm, but for the words that that accompanied the embrace:—"Juliana, Juliana, I am your uncle, that obdurate man who denied forgiveness to your angelic mother, and I have been justly punished. As the child of Josepha you are dear to me, and your own virtues speak volumes in your favour; a few words will tell my story: "I am Frederic Stonis, of whom you so often heard your mother speak, and the real Count de Albani; early in life I displayed a solemn and contemplative turn—a severe disappointment, where I had placed my affections, made me desirous of seclusion. The decease of my father called me to my title and estates; but I panted for retire-

ment, and had serious thoughts of resigning all to my nephew, my late brother's son, when he prevented me by attempting to bribe my servant to murder his master—the man promised and the plan was laid. He abhorred the deed, but seemingly consented, least it should be assigned to hands who had neither religion or remorse. A mock funeral took place—while I was supposed, by my nephew, to be mangled with wounds in a subterraneous cavern, to which I had been deluded. I left his punishment to heaven, and the torments of his own conscience. I had wealth, of which he had no knowledge or claim, more than sufficient for the way in which I meant to live. I travelled for several years about the continent, and at length settled at Albani, which is a favourite spot of mine; as I heard that Manfred had wholly abdicated the place, and there was no chance of meeting. I had heard of the tragical end of the Countess St. Alva and her child Isabella, by common report, and felt unfeigned affliction. You know, my dear niece, the misfortune that introduced me to the castle, and the subsequent events when I saw you; such was your resemblance to my sister Josepha, that I became convinced Manfred had deceived the world in respect to you, and the way in which you mentioned your child added strength to the idea.

"Joseph and one of the farmer's daughter's shall depart instantly for your Isabella. I wish not to expose him to public justice; on the score of my own wrongs, I should have rested quiet, but your's I never will forgive. Man was made to be the protector, not the enemy and oppressor, of defenceless women; restitution shall be made; we must repair with all speed to Venice." The Lady Isabella returned enraptured to the arms of a fond mother; she heard of her deliverance with joy; the old count was delighted. She was now in her fourteenth year, tall and elegant. Previous to their departure, Anselmo and his wife was sent for, and informed of every particular. They were surprised, for they had not the least knowledge of the claims of the real count; for when he had formerly resided at Albani, they were not among the number of the domestics, being hired by Manfred. Some of the villagers had known him in his youth; but on his return, in a feigned character, time and indisposition had erased every trace of what he formerly was: he reproved the aged pair for being such pliant tools to a man, who had neither principle nor the

least regard to the feelings of human nature; however, he pardoned them, on account of the kindness they had shewn to the situation of us and my child; and gave them a handsome remuneration; for the trouble to Pietro and his family, they were also liberally rewarded—they sat off for Venice, and on there arrival sent to the count, with a statement of their claims. He sent by a messenger, that three days were wanting for his decision; and in that time he should be both able to exculpate himself to them and the world. They waited till his answer came; it was thus—"Unable to bear even my own reflections on the evils I have committed, I have taken a step at which humanity shudders. I cannot bear retrospection—I had enough of riches, but was not content—my soul panted for more;—and the beauty of Juliana touched my heart.—I cannot face you—how can I account for what I had done?—'tis impossible—a pistol has been my passport to eternity—a few words, and no more!—forgive me. A child of Juliana's is yet living, a son: the appearance of death, was contrived, by a powerful potion, by a creature of my will; he was conveyed to the monastery of St. Mark's, and placed there as a person who was never to be owned, as he was an illegitimate child. He passes by the name of Octavian; and a paper is enclosed by which you can claim him. I have also sent papers, by which the existence of Juliana is proved. And all will be set right; but for me—here let a veil be dropped—my honoured uncle, forgive your wretched nephew, Manfred."

Juliana and her uncle shed tears of sympathy and regret; he was nearly related to them, and they deplored his crimes. He had indeed been just, so far as related to his relations; he declared by his will, that he had usurped the estate of his uncle, and that it was to be restored to him with all the arrears; and to Lady Juliana and her daughter (the existence of the latter he had, by the means of the treachery of the people to whom Anselmo had been entrusted, discovered Isabella) he had left a valuable sum at their own disposal. Alarmed by his manner of writing, they repaired immediately to his residence; but too late—the mansion was in the utmost confusion—the count had ventured on that world, from which no traveller returns. After a certain time, when the effects of the shock they received had subsided, the count and Lady Juliana made their legal and respective claims, with ultimate success.

Octavian, the real Justin Count St. Alva, was restored to his mother, and consequently to the estates of his family, which he was fully empowered to claim, by the papers found in the late count's possession; which proved, that when in his infant years, and ill of the meazles, a potion had been delivered to him, which gave him the semblance of death, and even putrefaction, and he was conveyed to the tomb prepared for him; and from thence by the monk who performed the funeral service in the cemetary of the convent of St. Mark's. He opened his coffin, and removed him at midnight; being indeed the principal contriver of this vile scheme to deprive the child of its rights. The meeting between a mother and a son, so long considered dead, cannot be described. He was a fine youth, of sixteen years of age, and had ever considered himself as an orphan, till convinced to the contrary: a proper statement was drawn up and delivered to the reigning ruler of the principality; the claims were pronounced to be just, and the young Count St. Alva took possession of his estates; his mother, his sister, and the aged Count de Albani, formed one household till the marriage of Isabella, which took place two years after the reunion of this now happy family; an alliance most pleasing to her mother, and abounding with felicity to herself.

The Count St. Albani resided many years with this affectionate family, ere he breathed his last. Lady Juliana would never enter into second nuptials, though often solicited; but lived most happy in the filial regards of her amiable children. She indeed lived to see their offsprings flourish, rich in good deeds and beneficence to the poor; and respected by their equals.

FINIS.

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